

Letter to the Editor

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Dear Editor,

This has reference to the article – 1962: The Battle of Namka Chu and Fall of Tawang (A View from the other Side of the Hill) by Maj Gen PJS Sandhu (Retd) published in the April-June 2013 issue of the USI Journal.

The article gives the account of Chinese attack on Namka Chu defences including Tsangdhar based on Chinese sources. The Chinese version of the sequence of attack is generally borne out by the survivors of 1/9 GR. However, the narration of fighting at Tsangdhar with interpolations gives the reader an impression that the commanding officer, Lt Col Ahluwalia and 492 men of 1/9 GR were taken prisoner without any fight. This letter seeks to correct that impression as the figures are factually incorrect.

On the morning of 20 Oct 1962, Tsangdhar was held by two platoons of the Gorkhas. On 17 October, Brig Dalvi was ordered to send a company of 1/9 GR to strengthen the company of 9 Punjab at Tsangle/Bridge V. In compliance, an oversized platoon under Maj Miniwalla was on its way to Tsangle on 18 October. On the evening of 19 October, Brig Dalvi was ordered by Maj Gen Niranjana Prasad (GOC), on orders of Corps Headquarters, to send the remainder of 1/9 GR to Tsangle. This was contested and the move did not take place. On the morning of 20 October, 1/9 GR was getting ready to 'Stand to' when the Chinese bombardment started. There was no plan to move the rest of the Battalion to Tsangle. At the time of Chinese attack on 20 October, Maj Minwalla with his platoon was at a place called Neylem on his way to Tsangle. On nearing Tsangle, Maj Miniwalla found 9 Punjab post vacated and could see the Chinese attack coming. Maj Minwalla and his platoon turned back and escaped to India through Bhutan after trekking for days in unknown territory.

The article mentions that while the Battle of Tsangdhar was in progress, the main body of the Chinese 157 Infantry Regiment advanced quickly towards Tsangdhar and occupied mountain

passes leading out of this area. In fact, when the Chinese were outflanking Tsandhar, the main body of the Chinese 157 Regiment were engaged in fighting with the companies of 1/9 GR, which were holding positions in depth of 2 Rajput. 1/9 GR casualty figures in this battle, including Tsangdhar, is 81 killed and 99 prisoners (as per 9 GR Records). The Regiment has written to Army Headquarters to give an authenticated list of prisoners of 1/9 GR repatriated by the Chinese in May 1963.

Yours sincerely,

Brigadier SP Sinha, VSM (Retd)

Note :-The author of this letter is from 9 GR and is currently writing the history of 9 GR from 1947-2015